



Department of Health

Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711
www.health.ri.gov

October 9, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you may have heard, the vaccine against H1N1 influenza virus (sometimes called swine flu) is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease and to prevent the spread of illness in schools. **The Department of Health is working with your child's school to give the H1N1 influenza vaccine to children in kindergarten through grade 12 at school.** Younger children (ages 6 months to 5 years) will be able to get vaccinated at their doctors' offices. There will be no cost to you for this vaccine and vaccination is voluntary.

Foster Parents: By now you should have received a separate communication with special instructions from the Department of Children, Youth and Families. If you have not, please immediately contact your child's case worker.

Consent Form

To have your child vaccinated at school, please sign and date the enclosed consent form and return it to the school. For school-aged children who do **not** get vaccinated in school, the vaccine is unlikely to be available in your physician's office or in other clinics until late December. The H1N1 vaccine is safe, and I plan to have my child get the vaccine. The H1N1 vaccine is made the same way as the seasonal flu vaccine by the same companies that make the seasonal flu vaccine. Some children (for example, children with egg allergies) need to receive the vaccine in their physicians' offices. In section 2 of the enclosed consent form, you will need to answer four questions about your child's allergies and existing medical conditions. Please note that if you answer "YES" to one or more of these questions, you will need to contact your child's doctor regarding whether or not your child should receive a flu vaccination at school. If you choose not to have your child vaccinated, there is no need to return the consent form. If you change your mind about having your child vaccinated before the scheduled vaccination date, you can contact your child's school.

School Clinics

School vaccination clinics will begin in November, or possibly earlier, depending on the availability of vaccine. Generally, elementary school children will be vaccinated in after-school clinics. A responsible adult should come with each child to these clinics. Middle and high school students will be vaccinated during the school day. Adults do not need to come with students to these clinics.

The school will notify you about clinic dates and times once we have enough vaccine to begin school-based clinics. The schedule will also be posted on the Department of Health's website. Please note that children under age 10 will require 2 doses of the vaccine, approximately one month apart. These second doses will be administered in school-based clinics and do not require a separate consent form.

Please visit our website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/> for updated information about the vaccine, vaccination clinics, or to download the consent form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Gifford".

David Gifford, MD
Director, Rhode Island Department of Health